

## **Chemistry Unit**

### **Case Record and Review Procedures**

#### **1 Purpose**

This document describes the Chemistry Unit (CU) procedures for recording and reviewing case-related materials, in compliance with the *FBI Laboratory Quality Assurance Manual* and *FBI Laboratory Operations Manual*.

#### **2 Scope**

These procedures apply to CU personnel preparing case records and personnel conducting reviews of CU cases.

#### **3 Case Records**

The combination of the 1A (or 1C) envelope(s) (*Supporting Documentation Envelope (7-251)*) and electronic files uploaded to Sentinel are referred to as the "case record".

##### **3.1 Administrative Records**

Records that do not pertain to the conclusions of the examinations performed are considered administrative records. The FBI Laboratory Number will be on each page of administrative records or on at least the first page of any bound administrative records.

The following are defined as administrative records in the CU:

- Incoming communications
- *FBI Laboratory Chain of Custody* forms (7-243 or 7-243a, Legacy cases)
- Forensic Advantage (FA) Chain of Custody
- *Chemistry Unit Secondary Evidence Log*
- *FBI Laboratory Activity and Communication Log* (7-245, Legacy cases)
- FA Communication Logs
- *FBI Laboratory Work Sheet* (7-2, Legacy cases)
- FA Case Report and FA Case Record Report

##### **3.2 Examination Records**

Case notes, forms, printouts, charts, and other records that pertain to the conclusions of the examinations performed are considered examination records.

The FBI Laboratory Number, the date of examination(s), and the examiner's initials/name/signature (handwritten or secure electronic equivalent) will be on each hard copy page of the examination records. The examiner's initials/name/signature acknowledges his/her agreement with the content of the examination records.

When examination records are prepared by a technician (or by an examiner performing work as a technician), the preparer's initials/name/signature (handwritten or secure electronic equivalent) will be on each hard copy page of the examination records representing his/her work.

If examination records are maintained only in FA, Laboratory practices will be followed for recording review and agreement of these records.

The following are defined as examination records or case notes in the CU:

- Handwritten or typed notes that describe observations and/or exams conducted [to include Case Notes Interface (CNI) in FA]
- Check-in notes
- Instrument printouts, including operating conditions
- Instrument sequence log (or *CU Autosampler Verification Log*)
- Calculations
- Photographs

### **3.3 Contemporaneous Changes to Physical Records**

If a handwritten change is made contemporaneously to a physical record, this will be indicated with an asterisk (\*) along with the initialed single strike-out and the change entered alongside. A date will not be required for this contemporaneous change as it is not considered an amendment.

### **3.4 Accounting for Pages in a Case Record**

The totality of the administrative and examination records (together or separately) will be accounted for and recorded. The FA Publish and Packet Manager will be used to account for electronic files that are maintained only in FA and then uploaded to Sentinel. One of the following techniques will be used to account for hard copy pages within the CU.

- Number the pages of the administrative and examination records in the form of "Page\_\_ of \_\_".
- Number each page of the administrative and examination records sequentially, indicating the last page in some manner.
- On the 1A envelope, write a description of the type of record and the number of each type present.

## 4 Case Record Review

The review of case records encompasses three forms of review: verification of identifications and associations, technical review, and administrative review. Each review process must be completed and recorded prior to issuing a *Laboratory Report* to a contributor.

An association, as defined by the CU, exists between two or more items if they possess one or more characteristics that indicate they could have originated from a common source. The strength of the association can vary and depends on the characteristics observed. Details on the nature and relative strength of an association between evidentiary items and/or evidentiary item(s) and known materials will be provided in the *Laboratory Report*.

### 4.1 Technical Reviews and Verifications of Identifications and Associations

In the CU, the technical review and verification of identifications and associations are combined into a single review process and will be conducted in accordance with Laboratory practices. This technical review will include a check of manual calculations, data transcriptions, and data reductions relevant to the examinations.

Another qualified and authorized individual in the discipline must conduct the technical review. The author should verify that the technical reviewer is available to conduct the review and then use FA to request the technical review, or simply provide the technical reviewer with the *Laboratory Report* and supporting records for Legacy cases.

An examiner may perform a technical review on a case record that contains a “packet(s)” of examination records they authored/co-authored, provided that the packet(s) has been technically reviewed by another qualified and authorized individual in the discipline that did not co-author the packet(s) in question. The technical review of the packet(s) will be recorded on the first page of the packet(s) with the reviewing examiner’s initials and/or signature (handwritten or secure electronic equivalent), the date, and a statement indicating that the packet(s) has been technically reviewed.

The case record technical review and verification of identifications and associations will be recorded within FA, or on the following line of the *Laboratory Report* file copy for Legacy cases:

Technically reviewed and identifications and associations verified by:  _____ Date: _____
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## 4.2 Administrative Reviews

Authorized CU administrative reviewers are documented in an Electronic Communication (EC) uploaded to Sentinel. The author of the *Laboratory Report* will use FA to request an administrative review, or simply provide the administrative reviewer with the *Laboratory Report* and supporting records for Legacy cases. The administrative review will be carried out in accordance with Laboratory practices and recorded in FA, or on the following line of the *Laboratory Report* file copy for Legacy cases:

Administratively reviewed by:

\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

A reviewer may perform an administrative review on a case record that contains a “packet(s)” of examination records they authored/co-authored, provided that the packet(s) has been administratively reviewed by another administrative reviewer that did not co-author the packet(s) in question. The administrative reviewer of the packet(s) will be recorded on the first page of the packet(s) with the reviewer’s initials and/or signature (handwritten or secure electronic equivalent), the date, and a statement indicating that the packet(s) has been administratively reviewed.

## 5 Expedited Results

Expedited or partial results of an examination(s) may be disseminated prior to issuing a *Laboratory Report*. When opinions and/or interpretations are directly communicated by dialogue with the contributor, a record of the specific dialogue will be retained in the appropriate communication log. See the *FBI Laboratory Quality Assurance Manual*, *FBI Laboratory Practices for Preparing, Reviewing, and Issuing Laboratory Reports and Retaining Records in Forensic Advantage (FA)*, and the *FBI Laboratory Practices for Preparing, Reviewing, and Issuing Laboratory Reports and Retaining Records for Legacy Cases* for further details. The following expedited or partial results of an examination(s) do not need to be verified by another appropriately qualified CU examiner prior to dissemination.

- Negative results
- Presumptive results
- Physical characteristics

## **6 Recording and Reviewing Concessions and Corrections**

Refer to the *FBI Laboratory Practices for Addressing a Nonconformity* for definitions of concessions and corrections. Concessions and corrections will be recorded within a logbook that is maintained by the Unit Chief. The Unit Chief will review this logbook annually (at a minimum) in an effort to identify any trends. The reviews and any observed trends will be recorded.

Rev. #	Issue Date	History
9	07/15/20	Minor edits to section 3.2 for clarity. Added section 3.3. Added "Record" to section 4 title; deleted parenthetical information after " <i>Laboratory Report</i> " in first paragraph Added "(handwritten or secure electronic equivalent)" for clarity in section 4.1. Edited section 4.2 to reflect authorized administrative reviewers via EC and removed 'packet' concept since unnecessary. Added recording of reviews in case notes in section 6.
10	03/15/21	Edited section 2 to account for case reviews by personnel not in CU. Section 4.1- edited to "qualified and authorized"; changed "category of testing" to "discipline" (2 instances each). Added administrative review of packets in section 4.2. Deleted previous section 6 (Alternate Reporting).

### **Approval**

Redacted - Signatures on File

Fire Debris  
Technical Leader:

Date: 03/12/2021

General Chemistry  
Technical Leader:

Date: 03/12/2021

Metallurgy  
Technical Leader:

Date: 03/12/2021

Paints and Polymers  
Technical Leader:

Date: 03/12/2021

Toxicology  
Technical Leader:

Date: 03/12/2021

Chemistry Unit Chief:

Date: 03/12/2021

### **QA Approval**

Quality Manager:

Date: 03/12/2021